



**Blue Soap Bubble by Joseph Cornell 1949 - 1950**  
**Built. 24,5 x 30,5 x 9,6 cm**  
**Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid**

# Memory boxes

*Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza en colaboración con los Centros Municipales de Mayores del distrito Centro de Madrid.*



**THYSSEN-  
BORNEMISZA**  
MUSEO NACIONAL

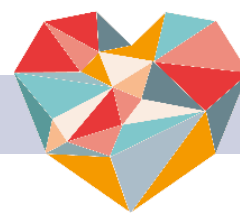


Dementia  
in Cultural Mediation



With the support of the  
Erasmus+ Programme

# The activity



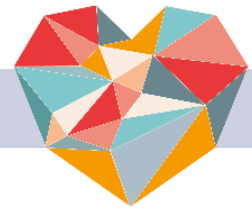
## Name of the activity

Building memories. "Memory boxes"  
Our experiences as an intangible treasure.

## Summary

With the work of Joseph Cornell Blue Soap Bubble as an example, we asked some people from the municipal centers for the elderly, linked to the memory groups, to create their own symbolic memory spaces. A series of small museums of their lives that turned out to be visual poems that, like Cornell's work, overstep the real space and become metaphors full of life, poetry and humanity.

# Content



## Target group

People with mild dementia or joint work of people with dementia and their families.

## Objective

The main objective of the activity is to enhance the value of people's experiences by treating memories and personal experiences as an intangible heritage and a treasure to be preserved and valued.

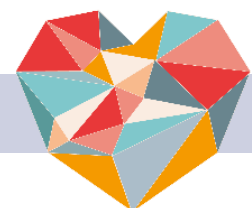
To make participants aware of the value of their lives and memories.

Generate networks between social and cultural institutions for social participation, visibility and enhancement of the value of the elderly.

## Partners

It is a simple activity that can be done individually, although if you want it to have an impact as a significant activity, it is advisable to seek the collaboration of cultural or educational institutions that have a public space for the exhibition of the results and their enhancement; museums, libraries, cultural centers, educational centers.

In our case it was framed as a broader collaboration between the Education Department of the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum and the Municipal Centers for the Elderly of the Central District of Madrid and with the intergenerational collaboration of students from high schools in the center of Madrid, which was given visibility in the Museum on the occasion of International Museum Day.



# Practical

## Venue

The realization of the boxes can be done in an interior, workshop format space with a previous work of collecting the vital narratives linked to our favorite small objects.

Once the objects and their meanings have been selected, we proceed to decorate the boxes that will serve as displays. In our case, we made them with shoeboxes that we decorated by lining them with different printed papers according to each participant's taste.

Finally, the objects are fixed in the boxes with adhesive tapes, taking care not to damage the objects for their preservation and to be able to recover them after their exhibition.

### **Things to consider/describe for this activity:**

For us the ideal group is between 10 and 15 people.

The spaces of the municipal centers for the elderly, where different workshops are held, and the spaces of the Museum's Workshop Classroom allowed us to have meeting spaces with tables, chairs and work materials for the activity.

In our case, since we were a population of elderly people living in the downtown district of the city where the Municipal Centers for the Elderly and the Museum are located, the participants came by their own means.

Both the Museum and the Municipal Senior Citizen Centers are spaces that comply with all physical accessibility standards.

The materials needed are basic, notebooks and pens to collect the narratives linked to the small objects or, failing that, a tape recorder to collect the oral story, boxes to build the display of the souvenirs, plastic materials for decoration.

## Day, time & duration

The day and time of the activity is flexible, in our case we meet a few afternoons a week during the schedule of the plastic workshops of the Municipal Centers for the Elderly. The first session, at the Museum, was used to talk about objects and memory, for the explanation of the activity and the selection of personal objects that we would like to put in the box of each participant, then it was done with sharing with the group. A second session, in the Municipal Centers for the Elderly, was used for the collection of objects and the decoration of the display box, a third session for the assembly of the exhibition of the boxes and the elaboration of the informative posters for each of the pieces.

In our experience, the minimum time to carry out this activity was three sessions of about two hours per session. As this action was part of a broader collaboration on memory as heritage, the Municipal Centers dedicated many more sessions to this and other complementary activities that were presented on International Museum Day at the Thyssen National Museum in Madrid. That day is a day of free access to the Museum.

For this activity it was necessary the work of the professional team of the Municipal Seniors City Centers, Facilitator, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Educators and the support and collaboration of the Museum educators.

## Group size

The number of participants will be determined by the autonomy and support needs they have, the greater the need for support the fewer participants and more professionals or volunteers. In our case the group with a majority of people with mild dementia was about fifteen with the support of professionals from the centers, their older volunteers and educators from the Museum.

## Supervisors and hosts

The number will depend on the support needs. In the case of the Municipal Centers for the Elderly, the very structure of their activities, such as the memory courses and the volunteerism of elderly people without dementia, greatly facilitated the work.

## Materials & facilities

The activity requires meeting spaces with comfortable chairs and work tables, tape recorders and plastic materials, paints, glue, scissors, blades, tape paper...

## Costs

In our case, the cost was free of charge both from the Municipal Senior Citizen Centers and from the Museum's Education Department.

## Name tags

The participants knew each other previously, although in the case of carrying out the activity with people who do not know each other it is highly recommended to name labels with the names to facilitate.

## Memento

After the exhibition activity, the participants recover their memory boxes and their objects, using the website and the videos to talk about the different experiences.

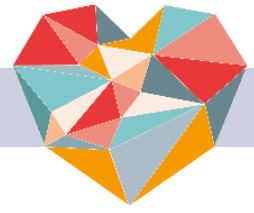
## Afterwards

In our case, both the activity of the memory boxes and the rest were collected during the International Museum Day and recorded and uploaded to the Museum's education website.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/educathyssen/albums/72157633441848307>

<https://www.educathyssen.org/museo-memorias>

# Communication & Registration



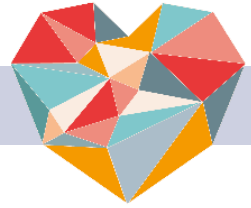
## Communication

In our case, the channels used were internal communication within the Municipal Centers for the Elderly of the Central District of Madrid. We communicated to the different workshop groups of the Center.

## Registration

The organization was done internally with the groups that participated from the senior centers, no registry was needed.

# Description & Program



During the first session at the Museum visit we learned about Joseph Cornell's work, Blue Soap Bubble and talked about the objects we keep, the importance they have and what they mean to us.

In the next session at the senior center, the boxes were made as an exhibition space and the memories that each participant wanted to exhibit were placed inside.

In a third session in the senior centers, the small Museum exhibition of the boxes was organized and opened to visitors, the pieces were documented, a small publication was edited for the participants and uploaded to the Museum's networks.

During the sessions at the Museum, a climate of cordiality and trust was created with the educators; during the sessions at the senior centers, spaces were found within the schedules of their workshops.

The activity was part of an extensive program on art and memory that included other activities, including an exhibition in one of the senior centers and a program of activities on International Museum Day at the Museum.

# Evaluation



No evaluation of the activity was carried out, but a debriefing was held with the participants to gather their impressions of the experience.



# Checklist, when to do what



## One month before the activity

- \_\_\_ Have a session about the artist, in this case Joseph Cornell, talk about our personal objects, treasure boxes, small most precious objects.

## Two weeks before the activity

- \_\_\_ Collect and share the personal objects of each participant, collecting the stories and memories of the different objects.

## A week before the activity

- \_\_\_ Prepare the display boxes for each participant, decorating them and including the objects.

## The day before the activity

- \_\_\_ Find the space for your exhibition and make the assembly with the posters including the story of the participants, set up the exhibition as a small museum.

## Day of the activity

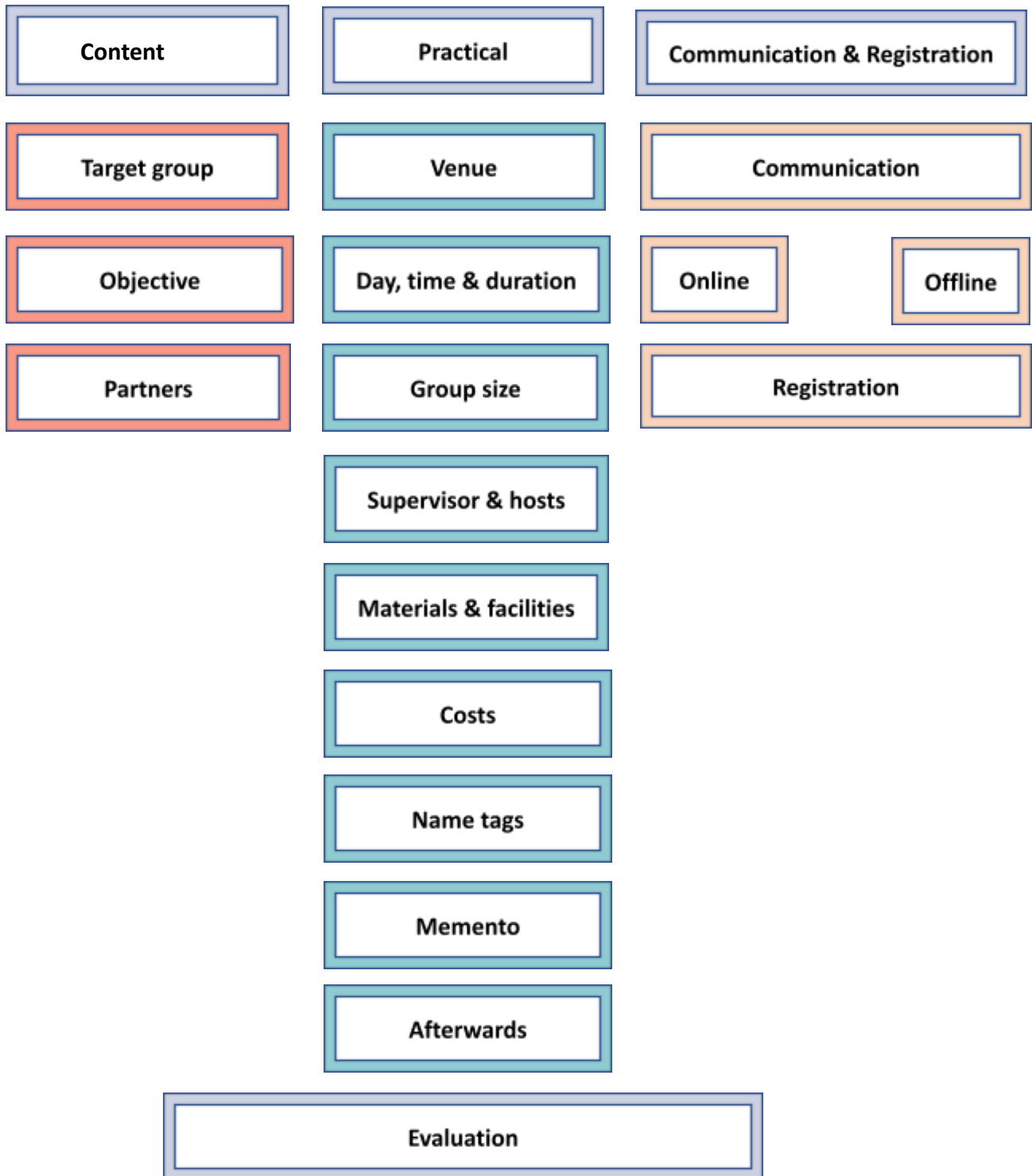
Inauguration of the exhibition open to family and friends with the older artists living with dementia as exhibition guides

## **Corona**

The activity was carried out prior to COVID-19 pandemic. Safety measures should be taken to ensure activity replicability.

## Points of attention





*Inspirational page relevant to the activity*

*Add pictures, collages, illustrations, quotes, etc*